

DISABILITIES NETWORK OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT
238 West Town Street, Norwich, Connecticut

TESTIMONY HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MARCH 4, 2011 RE: GOVERNOR'S HOUSE BILL 6380

GOOD EVENING SENATOR PRAGUE, REPRESENTATIVE HAMM REPRESENTATIVE VILLANO,
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

MY NAME IS CATHERINE FERRY. I AM FROM PORTLAND, CT. I AM SPEAKING TO YOU AS THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DISABILITIES NETWORK OF EASTERN CT, (DNEC). ALSO, I AM
THE PRESIDENT OF THE CT ASSOCIATION OF CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CACIL).

DNEC IS ONE OF CT'S 5 FEDERALLY AND STATE MANDATED CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT
LIVING. STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS, A MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES, WORK WITH INDIVIDUALS OF ANY DISABILITY OR AGE TO HELP THEM AND
THEIR FAMILY IN THE COMPLEX AND SOMETIMES FRUSTRATING PROCESS OF SELF
DETERMINATION AND INCLUSION.

WE HELP THAT INDIVIDUAL, WHO HAPPENS TO HAVE A DISABILITY, TO SET GOALS, TO MAKE
A PLAN, AND TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES THAT MAKE THAT PERSONAL LIFE GOAL HAPPEN.

THROUGH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, ADVOCACY, PEER COUNSELING, AND
INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING, WE HELP KIDS W DISABILITIES GET THE SPECIALIZED
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES THEY NEED TO LIVE INCLUDED AND INVOLVED. WE
HELP FOLKS WITH DISABILITIES GET HOOKED UP WITH BRS AND BESB AND TICKET TO WORK
WE TEACH THEM LIFESKILLS.. WE HELP THEM FIND PCAS, TRANSPORTATION, JOBS, HOMES.
YOUNG ADULTS GO ON TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION, OR INTO TAX PAYING JOBS. WE
SAY, I DID IT, YOU CAN, TOO.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING ARE EFFICIENT, COST EFFECTIVE, PROVEN BRIDGES TO
INCLUSION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED OR LEFT BEHIND. FOR INSTANCE, WE
ARE A MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON AGENCY. WE MOVE FOLKS WHO CAN, FROM NURSING
HOMES, TO THEIR OWN HOMES IN THE COMMUNITY, WITH APPROPRIATE SUPPORT
SERVICES. THEY ARE HAPPIER, AND CT SAVES MONEY.

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, WE UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE STATE'S DIFFICULT
FINANCIAL SITUATION. WE UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY TO CUT SOME OF OUR SMALL
HUMAN SERVICE FUNDING. I WOULD ASK YOU TO REMEMBER THAT WE DO SO MUCH FOR
SO MANY WHO HAVE LITTLE, AND WE DO IT WITH LITTLE.

OUR STATE CUTS LAST YEAR WERE BACK FILLED, PARTIALLY, WITH FEDERAL ARRA DOLLARS. THAT FUNDING IS VERY SHORTTERM, WITH SPECIFIC OUTCOMES. IN ADDITION, THE PROPOSED CUTS TO THE CURRENT FEDERAL BUDGET TARGET OUR PROGRAMS, AMONG MANY OTHERS. AND, PRESIDENT OBAMA'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE FUTURE, RECOMMENDS REMOVING THE FEDERAL CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT PART C AND B DIRECT FUNDS FROM WHERE THEY WERE MANDATED BY THE ADA SO MANY YEARS AGO, AND INSTEAD, BLOCK GRANTING THEM TO THE STATES.

WE HAVE A CORDIAL AND PRODUCTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH MANY ARMS OF DSS, OUR STATE AGENCY. HOWEVER, WE KNOW, (OR AT LEAST ADVOCATES AS OLD AND AS EXPERIENCED AS I AM KNOW), THAT IN HARD TIMES, BLOCK GRANTS FROM THE FEDS SEEM TO BE MISSING SOME OF THE ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION WHEN THEY ARRIVE (LATE), AND THEN THE CASH STRAPPED STATE AGENCY MUST USE THEM IN THE CURRENT PINCH TO FILL SOME HORRIBLE, IMPORTANT SLASH IN THE SERVICE NET.

I SAW IT HAPPEN WAAAAY BACK WITH RONALD REAGAN AND HIS BLOCK GRANTING OF COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER FUNDING.

THOSE DREAMS, AND THOSE CUTTING EDGE PROGRAMS DIED BEFORE THEY EVER SAW THE LIGHT OF DAY. IF THEY HAD NOT, STATE HOSPITAL CLOSURES MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DIFFERENT STORY. DON'T LET OUR ALMOST 25 YEAR HISTORY OF EFFECTIVE SERVICE GO THE SAME WAY.

IN THE WORDS OF THE OLD MAXIM, IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT!

LET US CONTINUE THE IMPORTANT WORK WE DO. WORK WITH US, AS WE WORK WITH DSS AND BRS AND BESB AND THE COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND THE OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY, TO HELP PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR COMMON GOOD.

THANK YOU.